



# **The Time Of The St. Louis Black Renaissance**

*by Ernest Calloway*

**COMMUNITY  
SURVIVAL**





## One Man's Thoughts



# 'The Time Of The St. Louis Black Renaissance

By ERNEST CALLOWAY

It was at the swearing-in ceremony of Fred Weathers as a member of the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners last week that reminded me of that short but significant period of black political and social effort that produced most of the meaningful change in the black condition in St. Louis. From a social and political point of view it could be referred to as the St. Louis Black Renaissance or the time of black political and social revitalization in St. Louis. It was the eventful 8-year period between 1956 and 1963.

What were the ideological perimeters of the St. Louis social and political renaissance? Was it a community state of mind? Did it cut across class lines in the St. Louis black community? Did it flow from a particular political climate and environment? What were the basic social and economic problems of the period and prior to the period? How were expanded systems of communication developed?

The human arithmetic of the period shows that in 1950 St. Louis was the 8th largest city in the U.S. (now 24th) with a population of 856,769 of which 153,766 or 18 percent were black. By 1956 the black population was approximately 180,000. By the 1960 census the black population had moved to 215,000 or 28 percent of the total.

The St. Louis black community at the time suffered many social liabilities. Like the white community, it was an extremely conservative community. Prior to the revitalization period St. Louis was considered one of the most segregated cities outside the south. Its housing patterns had been set many years before by restrictive covenants and residential segregation ordinances. Its hotels, restaurants and movie houses were all barred to black patrons. For the most part public schools continued their system of segregated schools even after the Supreme Court decision of 1954, although Catholic schools had integrated their schools in 1947. With the Exception of the street car system, blacks in St. Louis were perhaps the most restricted blacks in their living patterns found in major urban centers in the north and middle west at the time.

Yet, out of this neat and secure social vacuum, a new spirit did emerge in the black community of St. Louis. Step by step the St. Louis black community found a new and exciting social awareness. It discovered how unity and common purpose on the part of a community could pay great dividends. It



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raised human involvement to a new high level. In political effort, it depended wholly on its own resources — candidate selection, finance and campaigning. It was this growing positive environment that was at the heart of the new St. Louis Black Social and Political Renaissance between 1956-63.

This revitalization spirit in St. Louis moved black voter registration from 56,000 in 1955 to 100,000 in 1961. This figure constituted approximately 76 percent of the black voting age population in the city at the time, or the highest ever. (Today, the figure is about 47 percent.)

Black trade union membership in St. Louis moved from approximately 15,000 in 1955 to some 35,000 in 1962.

In the St. Louis NAACP branch membership moved from 2,700 in 1955 to 8,600 in 1958 — the highest membership before or after. St. Louis with 8,600 members in 1958 was listed as the 6th largest branch in the country at the 1959 convention, where it received 1st prize for having the best branch newspaper, "The St. Louis NAACP Citizen" and Fred Weathers honored for having done the best job in Life Membership activity in the country. In St. Louis NAACP life memberships had moved from 4 to nearly 200.

A full review of the year 1956 will indicate the quality of social, economic and political change



affecting the black condition in St. Louis that set the stage for the 2,900 days of the St. Louis Black Social And Political Renaissance.

Some of the major developments during 1956 include:

(1) The institution of an open-occupancy policy in the St. Louis public housing program following the victory of the St. Louis NASCP in the U.S. Federal Court. The suit had been pushed by the Housing Committee headed by Mrs. Valla Abbington. Atty Frankie M Freeman handled the case and the Housing Authority accepted the decision of the lower court. It had involved the Igoe housing project designated for white tenants, and the Pruitt project for black tenants.

(2) The first Fair Employment Practices ordinance was enacted by the Board of Aldermen. It covered the area of municipal contract holders and their employment policies.

(3) The elimination of discrimination against black taxi-cab drivers by major white-owned taxi-cab firms was achieved when an agreement was reached between the companies and the Teamsters Union. However, the new policy was met by a 12-day wild-cat strike by Laclede Cab drivers. The wild-cat strike collapsed when the Union refused to budge, and blacks for the first time in St. Louis joined the ranks of drivers of white-owned metered cabs. Also black and white drivers were integrated into the same

Teamsters local in the city.

(4) The employment of black driver-salesmen for the first time by the Coca Cola Company following a series of conferences between the Company and the Urban League, the Labor and Industry Committee of the NAACP and Teamsters Local 688.

(5) The employment of black clerical workers by the Federal Reserve Bank in St. Louis. This was primarily an Urban League initiative.

(6) A major concern of the St. Louis NAACP at the time was the low level of black commissioned personnel in the St. Louis Police Department. During the year a meeting between Ernest Calloway, the St. Louis NAACP president and Police Chief Jeremiah O'Connell to discuss the limited number of blacks being utilized in police work.

Later, during the year, the first black was promoted to police captain. He was Lieut. Edward S. Bolden, who was placed in command of the old 10th District.

(7) The appointment of Theodore McMillian as the first black Circuit Judge in St. Louis and Missouri by Gov. Phil M. Donnelly.

(8) Some relaxation of the traditional jim crow policy at local theatres with the opening of down-town theatres to blacks.

(To be continued. The next issue will deal with the City Charter struggle of 1957, the first major confrontation between the power establishment and the St. Louis black community.)



# The N. St. Louis Political Terrain In 1950

## How Irish Control Was Broken By Blacks

By ERNEST CALLOWAY

In 1950 the 15-ward area of North St. Louis was almost completely dominated by a hardy group of Irish politicians. With the exception of the 19th Ward all Democratic Committee Posts were held by whites. The Democratic ward committeeman in 1950 were as follows:

### Ward Dem. Committeeman

1st	Edward Roche
2nd	John L. Lawler
3rd	Joseph (Juggy) Hayden
4th	John (Jack) Dwyer
5th	James Deneffe
6th	Michael Kinney
18th	Charles (Turtles) Reardon
19th	Jordan Chambers
20th	Pat Lavin
21st	William Clark
22nd	Matt O'Neill
25th	Morris Shenker
26th	Martin Tozer
27th	Roy Farrar
28th	William Hillsman

In 1950 there were only 8 blacks elected to public office. This included three aldermen, three state representatives, one magistrate and one constable. The dominant leaders in this Irish-dominated, faction-ridden 15 ward sector of St. Louis politics were: **Tom Callanan**,

### Political office held or other

Deputy Clerk, Circuit Court
Business Agent, Steamfitters Union
License Collector
City Treasurer, Chm., Dem. Central Com.
Magistrate
State Senator
Constable
Clerk, Court of Criminal Corrections (Later Leo Morrell)
Constable, Bus. Agent, Bricklayers Union
Lawyer
State Senator

In 1950 the black population of the city was 153,766 or 18.0 percent of the city's total. During the early 50's the Board of Election Commissioners records show a total of 354,239 registered voters in the city. Of this number 59,926 or 17.3 percent were black. At the time the names of black voters on the precinct sheets were identified with the letter (c) (for colored) after the name.

A break-down of the wards with substantial black voters in February of 1955 shows the following:

Ward	Total Registered	Black Registered	Percent Black
19th	12,113	11,656	96.2%
18th	12,626	12,061	95.5%
6th	8,992	7,174	79.5%
4th	12,293	9,658	78.6%
5th	9,520	4,212	44.7%
26th	10,409	4,357	41.9%
20th	11,239	4,194	37.3%
16th	10,689	1,711	16.0%
7th	9,238	1,276	13.8%
21st	11,579	916	7.9%
3rd	10,577	880	8.3%

In 1950 black citizens constituted about 17 percent of the city's population with 90 percent of this located in the above wards. Among these 15 wards, which today all are predominantly or substantially black, only four wards in 1950 had black population majorities. The 4th Ward was approximately 80% black; the 6th Ward of Mike Kinney was almost 80% black, the 18th Ward of Turtles Reardon was about 95% black and Jordan Chambers 19th Ward was approximately 96% black.

At the time such wards as the 1st, 2nd, 27th and 28th had less than 1% black population. The 25th was 4% black, the 22nd Ward was 2% black, the 21st Ward was 8% black. On the other hand the 5th Ward in 1950 was about 45% black, the 26th Ward was 42% black and the 20th Ward about 37% black.

A great deal of this westward movement of black population was encouraged by the 1948 Supreme Court's decision declaring restrictive covenants illegal, or rather unenforceable.

In 1952, Fred Weathers, a political protege of Jordan Chambers, in a hard-fought campaign, defeated "Turtles" Reardon for Democratic Committeeman in the 18th Ward, becoming the 2nd black Democratic committeeman in St. Louis politics. The 18th Ward, at the time was a strong-hold of





Negro middle-class Republican sentiment, and the alderman — Atty. Sidney Redmond — was a leading black Republican. He was later defeated by black Democrat Wayman Smith, Jr.

By 1954 the City had four black Democratic aldermen. They were T. H. Mayberry of Jack Dwyer's 4th Ward; Archie Blaine of Kenney's 6th Ward; Dewitte Lawson of the 19th Ward and Wayman Smith of the 18th Ward. There were also three state representatives: Leroy Tyus of the Chambers organization; John Green of the Dwyer organization and James P. Troupe, an opponent of Chambers operating in the 5th Ward.

By 1956-57 the winds of change began to stir in the St. Louis black community against the white Irish domination of north St. Louis politics and the limited role of black involvement around the dominant political personality of Jordan Chambers. The Supreme Court decision of 1954, the emergence of Martin Luther King in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the continuing resistance of the St. Louis Board of Alderman to adopt a public accommodations law to combat the suffocating racial discrimination in places of public accommodations and the continuing failure of the Civil Service Commission to change its policy on municipal employment all combined to create a changing political mood in the St. Louis black community.

In 1956 a Board of Freeholders was elected to produce a new city charter (constitution) for presentation to the voters for approval.

During 1957 a series of hearings were held. The St. Louis NAACP was actively involved in many of these hearings. The prime concerns of the organization revolved around the matter of civil rights provisions in the Charter, changes in the procedures of the Civil Service Commission in the matter of

municipal employment and the structure of the Board of Aldermen. Two blacks had been elected to the Board of Freeholders — David Grant and C. B. Broussard. The Freeholders refused to seriously consider the two civil rights issues, and the third — the structure of the Board of Alderman — (the 8-8-1 plan) was wholly unacceptable to the NAACP and its supporters.

The Charter lost — 107,000 votes against, 70,000 votes for.

The political experience of 1957 served as a great stimulus to the new black political mood, and in several cases the Citizen Assemblies were held intact by the leaders involved in the Charter fight.

In 1959 a wave of political unity in the black community took place in the election of the Rev. John J. Hicks to the Board of Education, the first black so elected. Also in 1959 young William Clay, chairman of the St. Louis NAACP Youth Council, challenged Alderman William Brady of the 26th Ward and became the 5th alderman in the city.

Also in 1959 Lawrence Woodson in the 20th Ward defeated Edgar Feelay for alderman to become the 6th black alderman.

In 1960 T. D. McNeal of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters had a solidified black community behind him in his state senatorial campaign against veteran Steamfitter-backed Edward (Jelly-Roll) Hogan, and became the first black elected to the Missouri senate.

Also in 1960 Norman Seay of Clay's 26th Ward organization defeated Martin Tozer for committeeman of the 26th Ward. Leroy Tyus achieved the same feat in the 20th Ward by defeating James Lavin for Democratic committeeman of the ward.

In 1961 a strong community campaign was waged for James

Hurt for School board. He became the second black elected to the Board of Education.

By 1962, the back of Irish dominance of North St. Louis politics was broken. However, other forms of control of black political leadership began to emerge as represented by the Steam-Fitters Union and certain Syrian spokesmen.

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## The Time Of The St. Louis Black Renaissance, Part 2

By ERNEST CALLOWAY

One would suspect that what was really happening at the beginning of that period of St. Louis black revitalization during the late 1950's was that this community of 180,000 socially and economically restricted blacks began to develop a faith in itself, and the desire to change the insidious black condition through common, aggressive, intelligent action.

However, the major problem that enveloped the St. Louis black community was both structural and psychological. Meaning that major decisions affecting the black community were made by outside forces and not by leadership elements within the community. These external decision-makers within the St. Louis power establishment had persons in the black community whose primary task was to give the impression that these external decisions served the best interest of the black community. Their job was to keep the natives quiet and subdued.

In 1956 some new forces began to emerge within the St. Louis black community who felt the time had come to shift the traditional "external" decision-making apparatus within the black community to a new "indigeneous" and collective decision-making force representing the real concern and interests of the community. This led to the City Charter struggle of 1957, the first major confrontation between the power establishment and the St. Louis black community.

The present city constitution or city charter was written in 1915. In 1949 an effort was made to re-write it, but it failed. In 1956 a Board of Freeholders was elected to develop a new city constitution and public hearings were held during the early part of 1957. Two black representatives were elected to the Board of Freeholders — Atty David M. Grant and Prof. C. B. Broussard.

For the most part this new charter effort resulted from great pressures exerted by eastern and local banking interests as well as the local corporate community. At the time St. Louis was preparing for some new major investment activity as a result of slum clearance and urban development programing in Mill Creek and areas adjacent to the Central Business District. Eastern investment groups (Chase-Manhattan, etc.) had faced some difficult problems with St. Louis county municipalities and were not desirous of going through the same experiences with the City of St. Louis. Consequently, they were demanding a series of charter "reforms" as a greater protective cover for their major investments in the city of St. Louis. The banks and



the corporate community had a preference for a municipal charter that produced an exceptionally strong mayor type and a smaller and tighter legislative instrument or body. Very little of this was known at the beginning by the general public.

In early 1957 the Freeholders began holding hearings and parts of the proposed charter began to take form. In the first instance the agreed upon proposals failed to consider a primary problem of black citizens of St. Louis, namely — the exclusion of blacks from places of public accomodations. Secondly, the committee proposals to be submitted to the voters August 6, 1957 also failed to improve civil service provisions in municipal employment which permitted the relegation of blacks to the bottom rung and lower paid jobs in municipal government.

The St. Louis NAACP, CORE and others took the lead in calling these weaknesses in the charter to the Board of Free-holders and the broad community.

Black political leaders had agreed to a compromise on the structure and number of aldermen to compose the Board of Aldermen. The compromise reduced the aldermanic body from 29 to 19. This was the 14-4 and 1 plan in which 14 were to be elected on an area basis, 4 elected city-wide and a president to be elected city-wide. But this did not satisfy the bankers. They wanted a smaller legislative body, 15 to be exact. Eight to be elected city-wide and seven on a broad area basis. Blacks probably could have elected one out of the 15 under this scheme. By a vote of 8 to 4 the bankers had their



way in the Board of Freeholders.

Led by the St. Louis NAACP, a coalition of elements began to form to oppose a charter for the city of St. Louis that could not commit itself to the protection of the civil rights of over 20 percent of its citizens; that could not commit itself to the maintenance of fair employment practices in civil service employment, and finally to submit a proposal that would freeze the political process for thousands of blacks in St. Louis.

For all practical purposes the 1957 proposed charter was a Declaration of War against the black community of St. Louis. In another way, it was not a new city constitution, but rather a Treaty of Surrender to Chase-Manhattan Bank by the City of St. Louis.

But the black community of St. Louis accepted the challenge and somehow it changed the history of the city.

Black community mobilization began to take form. Most of it was co-ordinated by the St. Louis NAACP. It was a major effort in mass involvement. This included churches, businesses, labor unions, fraternal groups, social clubs, sororities and fraternities, veteran groups, housewives, beauticians and neighborhood groups. The first group to be organized was the St. Louis Charter Action Committee. Its function was to conduct a series of Town Hall meetings at various churches and other spots. It was headed by Rev. G. Wayman Blakely, pastor of St. Paul AME Church.

The St. Louis NAACP also organized NAACP Citizen Assemblies in all of the black wards of the city. These groups were designed for voter registration and to maximize voter turn-out on election day. The 4th Ward NAACP Citizens Assembly was headed by T. H. Mayberry, the 5th Ward Assembly was headed by Mrs. Emma Stewart, the 20th Ward group was headed by Lawrence Woodson and the 26th Ward Assembly headed by Mrs. Ida L. Harris.

There were some influential elements in the black community who supported the Charter despite its weakness, and others whose close relationship with the downtown "external" decision-making apparatus worked hard for the Charter. As a matter of fact, the forces behind the Charter were so powerful that many felt that it could not be defeated. All of the daily newspapers, all television stations and most of the radio stations had endorsed the Charter. The major black newspapers supported the Charter. The St. Louis Argus made strong editorial appeals to the black community seeking support for the Charter. The 4th Ward Democratic Organization, by Jack Dwyer, chairman of the Democratic Central Committee, strongly supported the proposal.

Nonetheless, the summer of 1957 produced in the St. Louis black community one of the greatest demonstrations of community solidarity on a single issue that the St. Louis area has witnessed. Hundreds of meetings were held in the back-yards

up to voting time, Aug. 6.

The case for the opposition to the Charter was made by the St. Louis NAACP in a statement "Why We Oppose"

"We reject any notion that the proposed charter is of divine origin. It has many good points and many defects, especially for St. Louis Negro citizens.

"To understand it clearly, it must be studied in terms of past experiences as well as in terms of future hopes and aspirations. It must be studied in terms of present problems and also in terms of future democratic goals of the Negro people of St. Louis."

"A constitution, whether local, state or federal can never operate in a vacuum. It must be a living, breathing thing with the necessary social stamina to withstand restrictive, self-defeating pressures, and elastic enough to meet the many changes that will take place in years to come. This proposed Charter grievously fails to meet this criteria. Some of the basic failures are:

- 1—It does not face up to the major constitutional question of our times — the matter of civil rights. Any municipal constitution that cannot face this issue squarely in 1957 is not worthy of the support of the St. Louis Negro community, or any one else for that matter

- 2—It does not remove the fundamental basis for discrimination in municipal employment covered by civil service. Simple economic justice demands today that Negro citizens be given an equal opportunity in city employment. In the absence of such guarantees the proposed Charter is not worthy of the support of Negro citizens

- 3—The proposal to reduce the Board of Aldermen from 29 to 15 members and elect a majority of them on a city-wide basis is perhaps one of the most dangerous provisions in the proposed charter in terms of future Negro political representation. This provision is a conspiracy against the growing political influence of the Negro community. For this reason it is not worthy of support by the St. Louis Negro community.

On Tuesday, August 6, 1957 approximately 500 St. Louis NAACP volunteers moved throughout the black community ringing door-bells and urging people to vote. When it was all over the Charter that could not fall was defeated by a vote of 106,855 to 71,146.

Amazingly, the black voter turn-out was 60 percent of registration as compared with the usual turnout of 20 percent in elections of this type. The black community voted 5 to 1 against the charter.

On a matter of black employment, this writer, some 8 months later, met with Edwin M. Clark, President of Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. and one of the top corporate decision-makers in the city,



blurted out before we got to the subject at hand.

"Mr. Calloway", he said in his deep southern drawl, "there is one thing I would like to say now. You colored people gave us business leaders a hell of a whipping in that Charter fight last August."

Nonetheless, the experience of the Charter struggle of 1957 added new dimensions to the St. Louis Black Renaissance. The new dimensions included:

a—It opened up a new black political mood in St. Louis which brought new political gains in the months ahead.

b—It produced a new indigenous, collective decision-making force to compete with the temporarily shattered "external" forces.

(To be continued. The next issue will deal with the Famous Barr black sales personnel struggle and the A and P fight.)





## The Time Of The St. Louis Black Renaissance, Part 3

### The Battle For Black Sales Personnel

By ERNEST CALLOWAY

In September of 1957 the first comprehensive on-going black employment strategy was developed in the city. It was reflected organizationally in the formation of the Job Opportunities Council within the St. Louis NAACP.

Its function was one of co-ordinating a total program in the Negro employment and training field. IN the field of education, investigation, research, planning and direct action, this unique NAACP branch unit made improved black employment its prime objective.

T. D. McNeal, Int'l Vice President of the Brotherhood Of Sleeping Car Porters, was named chairman, and Atty Margaret Bush Wilson was named Secretary.

The 7-point program of the JOC were as follows:

1—To determine the extent of violations on the part of St. Louis firms holding government contracts which included non-discriminatory provisions in the matter of employment. Efforts will be made to process such cases before the President's Committee On Contract Compliance.

2—To determine the extent of violations on the part of firms obtaining contracts on public works projects paid for in whole or in part by municipal bond issue funds. In such cases of violation efforts will be made to process the matter before the newly created St. Louis Fair Employment Practices Commission.

3—To investigate the extent of exclusion of Negroes within the Apprenticeship Training Program sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Labor in co-operation with the Board of Education, industry and unions.

4—To study the legal status of utilities holding public monopolies granted by the City of St. Louis with special references to fair employment practices.

5—To seek greater employment of the Negro in the sales, administrative and clerical fields. This will include banks, department stores, furniture stores, clothing stores, super-markets, automobile sales agencies and other consumer goods industries.

6—To seek to remove all discriminatory bars against Negroes practiced by many unions in the St. Louis area.

7—To seek the creation of a municipal Equal Opportunity Commission made up of a representative group of top business leaders,



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trade union leaders and Negro spokesmen to carry on a continuing, positive program to fully integrate into the mainstreams of the St. Louis labor market and economy.

#### THREE TARGETS

In November of 1957 the Job Opportunities Council selected the three major supermarket chains — A&P, Kroger and National Tea — at their first targets in the equal job opportunities struggle. The three companies operated some 18 super-markets in the black community at the time, and the employed a very small number of black employees — mostly in custodial occupations.

The first step was the conducting of a **customer concern campaign**. During November cards were distributed to thousands of super-market shoppers. The card simply stated: "We want more than token employment of Negroes in your business" — "A Regular Customer". Customers were advised to give the cards to the store managers. It was also pointed out to shoppers that this was not a boycott, but part of an educational program to inform the management of customer concern in the matter of fair employment for blacks in all areas of the company and super-markets.

Both Kroger and National Tea indicated that they were prepared to enter into discussions with the NAACP's Job Opportunities Council, but the local management of A&P balked at any meeting with the JOC.



## A&P PICKETED

After three weeks of A&F resistance the JOC decided to place "freedom lines" or picket lines at the A&P store located at that time on Easton Ave near Kingshighway. This demonstration urged customers not to trade in the particular store, but to give their business to National Tea across the street or Kroger on Kingshighway. The reasons for this action was given to the customers. Within several days of "around the clock" picketing this A&P super-market was completely free of customers. The problem became so acute and startling that a Vice-President from the company's Chicago office quickly came to St. Louis to get a picture of what had happened overnight to this one unit in the massive food chain.

Later JOC representatives and the A&P Vice-President conducted a series of discussions and an agreement was worked out by both parties. The broad outlines were as follows:

1—In co-operation with the meat-cutters union, the A&P apprenticeship program for meat-cutters was opened to Negroes. Some time later the first black meat-cutter (St. Louis A&P) was employed by the Easton avenue store.

2—More Negro clerks will be placed in super-markets located in the Negro community.

3—Negroes will be hired above the porter level on a replacement basis at the Company's warehouse and bakery.

4—A studied effort will be made by the Company to introduce Negro clerical personnel into the St. Louis general office of the Company.

5—A continuing review program was agreed upon in which the Job Opportunities Council of the NAACP and A&P management would review and study progress being made in these areas of employment.

For the most part this understanding with A&P became the basis for an understanding with National Tea and Kroger in the early part of 1958.

## LACLEDE GAS

In July of 1958, following a conference with representatives of the St. Louis Urban League and the Job Opportunities Council of the St. Louis NAACP the Laclede Gas Company announced a new integrated employment policy which had been adopted by the Board of Directors of the Company.

During the spring of 1958 St. Louis CORE instituted supervised demonstrations at the Stix-Baer-Fuller department store as a protest against the refusal of the big down-town department store to serve Negro patrons in the tea room.

Later in the summer St. Louis CORE under the leadership of Mrs. Marian Oldham entered into discussions with the management of the Famous-Barr department store on the question of the store employing Negro sales personnel. Somehow the discussions were abruptly brought to an end by the Company.

## CORE, NAACP, FAMOUS-BARR

The CORE representatives approached the Job Opportunities Council of the St. Louis NAACP on the question of joint action on the problem of Negro sales employment at Famous-Barr and other department stores. Both organizations moved into a program of joint action. It was announced that a mass demonstration sponsored by the two community organizations would take place within 10 days around the question of Negro sales employment at Famous-Barr.

This brought out the big guns downtown. The company brought in the top executive of a well-known public relations firm to advise them on how to handle the problem. The company held meetings with a number of Negro personalities in the city in an effort to split the black community on this issue. It was finally announced that tea rooms in all department stores downtown would be opened to Negro patrons. This was a master stroke. It did split the Negro community, especially in the middle-class areas. The opening of the tea rooms to black patrons was welcomed, but the primary issue was still the matter of black sales employment.

A mass meeting was held at a leading black church to sort things out. The company had announced that it was willing to meet with the NAACP and CORE representatives but felt that several ministers should be included in the discussions. The demonstration was cancelled and the job conference began with Famous-Barr.

The company indicated that it was faced with a tremendous morale problem among its white employees in sales work with the notion of bringing strange, black sales personnel into the work force.

We reminded the company that they may have a way out. At that time Famous-Barr was installing mechanical elevators and eliminating elevator operators. Elevator operators at Famous-Barr were some of the most attractive Negro girls in the city of St. Louis. They were friendly with white sales personnel.

We suggested to the company that it may make sense to train the elevator operators for sales jobs. The resistance on the part of the white sales personnel would probably be very low. The Famous-Barr management accepted the notion.

And this was how Negroes were introduced into sales work in St. Louis downtown department stores in 1958. And how tea rooms were opened. And how supermarkets changed their policies on black employment in St. Louis.

(To be continued. Electing the first black to the St. Louis Board Of Education in 1959 and expanding black membership on the Board Of Aldermen. Next issue.)



**One Man's Thoughts: Politics, 1980**



# The Time Of The St. Louis Black Renaissance, Part 4

## Electing First Black To School Board

By ERNEST CALLOWAY

Since 1929 St. Louis blacks had been making efforts to elect a black to the elitist 12-member St. Louis Board Of Education. In this city-wide contest held every two years, four members — on a staggered basis — would be elected for six-year terms.

But it was not until April 7, 1959 — some 30 years after the first serious effort — that a black was finally elected to the Board of Education. He was the Rev. John J. Hicks, pastor of Union Memorial Methodist Church. His election as the first black to the Board serves as a major highlight of the St. Louis period between 1956 and 1963 — the time of the St. Louis Black Renaissance, or a short time when the black community of St. Louis was about the unified business of making some basic changes in the black condition at that time.

Rev. Hicks later was to become the first black to serve as president of the St. Louis Board of Education.

### FIRST BLACK TO RUN

The first black to file for a position on the Board of Education was John W. Hayes in 1929. In 1931 Mrs. Julia Childs Curtis was the black candidate, and in 1933 Mrs. Zenobia Shoulders Johnson filed. Charles Gates was the candidate in 1935 and Rev. C. Stevens in 1937.

In 1939 Atty. Robert Witherspoon made an active drive for election to the Board. He received 23,751 votes. However, he came out 10th in a field of 11 candidates.

No black candidates ran for the Board of Education in 1941 and 1943, but in 1945 a campaign was organized behind Atty. Sidney Redmond. He received 31,892 votes, but came in 9th out of a field of 10 candidates. In 1947 no black candidate filed, and in 1949 the Rev. L.L. Hayes filed, but had to withdraw because of residence requirements.

In 1950 a vacancy occurred in the board. In an unusual move Mayor Joseph Darst appointed Dr. Edward L. Grant, a black dentist to fill the unexpired term. Grant became the first black to enter the hollowed fraternity — the St. Louis Board of Education. In 1951 he ran for the full 6-year term. He lost with 33,266 votes coming in 11th out of 13 contestants.

Father Joseph Nicholson, pastor of All Saints Episcopal Church made the race in 1953. He achieved a vote of 53,983, but came out 9th of 10 candidates. In 1955 Dr. Walter A. Younge was sponsored by the Committee For A Representative



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School Board and received 53,688 votes. He came out 5th in this election and missed it by one. Later he was appointed to fill an unexpired term. In 1957 he ran for a six year term. He received 48,005 votes and again emerged in 5th place.

### PLANNING A CAMPAIGN

The Hicks campaign began with a conversation between Fred Weathers, 18th Ward Democratic Committeeman and T.D. McNeal of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the autumn of 1958. The discussion expanded to others as it concerned the need for a top-rate black candidate for the school board race in early 1959 and a concerted community effort to elect a black to the school board for the first time.

A committee discussed this with Rev. Hicks and he agreed to serve as the candidate. In December of 1958 this writer was not a candidate for re-election as president of the St. Louis NAACP. He supported Atty. Margaret Bush Wilson for branch president, and upon invitation he immediately moved into the Hicks school board drive as campaign director.

Following the creation of a Finance Committee and renewed effort on the part of the previously organized Committee For A Representative School Board, the major task became one of collecting facts, figures and information on previous elections in which a black candidate participated. The purpose was one of seeking a picture of the voting behavior of the various St. Louis groups in school



board elections. At that time the black population was over 27 percent, the black voter registration approximately 23 percent of the 310,390 registered voters in the city, and black public school enrollment over 45 percent of the total.

#### LOW PARTICIPATION

Figures revealed that during the school board elections during the 50's only an average of 27.4 percent of black registered voters went to the polls to vote. Also about 20 percent of the black candidate's vote came from voters in white wards. In comparing these and many other figures and developments, it was concluded that the participation level of the black voter would have to be raised substantially in the 1959 school board election.

This effort was pursued on several fronts. Regular political organizations were asked to maximize their "get out the vote" efforts. Fred Weathers, 18th Ward leader and Jordan W. Chambers, 19th Ward Democratic Committeeman took the lead in dealing for the Hick's candidacy with other political leaders in the city.

The Committee For A Representative School Board, headed by Joseph Williams and Dr. S. Edward Gilbert, carried on a continuing drive and maintained a high level of interest.

#### THE CITIZEN ASSEMBLIES

A Citizens Assembly was organized to operate in the various wards in the black community. Citizen Assembly units were formed in each ward, and the primary function was to raise the level of voter participation, or "selling" Rev. Hicks to the ordinary voter and getting that voter out on election day. These citizen assemblies were designed to implement the work of the regular ward organization in seeking large turn-outs on election day in those wards supporting Rev. Hicks. Leaders of the Citizen Assembly units included: Rev. Frank Madison Reid, 4th Ward; Mrs. Lillian Sewell, 5th Ward; Mrs. Olivia Calloway, 18th Ward; T.D. McNeal, 20th Ward; Herman Thompson, 21st Ward; James Carrington, 22nd Ward and Rev. W.K. Fox, 26th Ward.

The campaign moved into high gear. Hicks won

the endorsements of nine or ten wards as well as unions and other groups. There were some problems, however. In the final days a great deal of scurrilous literature on Hicks began to appear. The source came from some of the white Democratic committeeman operating in the black community. As a matter of fact in the 20th Ward he was doubled-crossed on election day by the Democratic committeeman Pat Lavin when his name was dropped from the ballot.

But St. Louis history was made on the 7th day of April in 1959 when Rev. John J. Hicks became the first black elected to the St. Louis Board of Education.

He was second among the 4 elected with 46,512 votes. He was a winner (among the top four) in 13 of the 28 wards. He led the group of 11 candidates in 9 wards.

#### BOARD OF ALDERMEN

On that same day and same election additional history was made by the St. Louis black community when it elected two additional black members to the St. Louis Board of Aldermen — Alderman Lawrence Woodson of the 20th Ward and Ald. Wm. Clay of the 26th Ward.

Among the major U.S. cities that elected their aldermen or councilmen on a ward basis are Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis, Philadelphia, etc. With the election of Woodson and Clay to the St. Louis Board of Aldermen in 1959, it brought the total number of blacks to six in this aldermanic body. This piece of arithmetic gave the St. Louis black community in 1959 the largest percentage of black municipal legislators among major cities in the United States. The top three at the time were: Chicago had 6 black aldermen out of 50 at the time for 12%; Cleveland had 7 black councilmen out of 35 for 20%, and St. Louis had 6 black aldermen out of 28 for 21.6%.

(To be continued. Electing the first black state senator, 1960 — and saving Missouri for John F. Kennedy.)





# The Time Of The St. Louis Black Renaissance, Part 5

## Electing The 1st Black State Senator And Issuing A Black Political Manifesto In 1960

By ERNEST CALLOWAY

It is 1960 and we are at the mid-point in the developing black social and political revitalization in St. Louis. Following the report of the 1960 census later in the year the black population of the city will be pegged at 215,000 or 28.6 percent of the total. While the city has lost a substantial amount of white population, it has shown significant gains in its black population. The black population has now moved westward to the city limits in 27 predominantly black census tracts, and northward from Delmar to Natural Bridge.

Within this general area there were eight predominantly black wards with some 85,795 registered voters, and another 10,000 or more black voters could be found in adjacent wards classified as racially mixed. This gave St. Louis in 1960-61 approximately 100,000 black registered voters, composing about 70 percent of the black voting age population. Today the figure is down to about 48 percent.

### IRISH POLITICAL DOMINANCE

For many years the 15-ward area of North St. Louis had been dominated by a hardy group of Irish politicians: the Jack Dwyers, the Juggy Haydens, the Mike Kinneys, the John Lawlers, the Tom Callanans, the Matt O'Neills, the Jim Deneffes, the Pat Lavins, the Leo Morrells and others had extended their political influence beyond Kerry Patch to envelop all of North St. Louis including the rapidly expanding black wards.

1960 is the year that this Irish political dominance of black north St. Louis is successfully challenged, but on the other hand, it is also the year that black north St. Louis saved the state of Missouri for an Irish Catholic Presidential candidate — John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

While Fred Weathers had ousted Turtles Reardon in 1952 to become the Democratic committeeman in the 18th ward and to join Jordan Chambers of the 19th ward as the only two black democratic leaders in north St. Louis, 1960 was the beginning of a new black political push in north St. Louis.

### 3 CENTERS OF IRISH POWER

There were three centers of continuing power that sustained the Irish political thrust in North St. Louis: (1) the Jack Dwyer center. He was Democratic committeeman of the 4th Ward, City Treasurer and chairman of the Democratic Central Committee. He was the major fund raiser for the party and major dispenser of patronage, (2) The Mike Kinney Center. He was Democratic committeeman of the 6th ward and long time state



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senator. This center of influence was closely related with the legislative needs of the Central Business District, (3) The "Jelly-Roll" Hogan Center. Senator Edward J. Hogan was an institution in the Missouri General Assembly. He first entered the Mo. House in 1916 and the Mo. Senate in 1944. He was chairman of the powerful Senate Ways And Means Committee (it controlled tax issues) It was this committee that served as Hogan's power center in north St. Louis politics. A fourth Irish base had withered at the time with the defeat of Sheriff Tom Callanan by Martin Tozer.

### CHALLENGE TO HOGAN

A committee of us (Fred Weathers, Dave Grant and Calloway) worked very diligently to get T. D. McNeal to agree to serve as a candidate against Jelly-Roll Hogan for 7th District State Senator. He resisted, but after some concentrated effort he agreed. His one condition was that I (Calloway) would serve as his campaign director. I had served in a similar role the year before in the Hicks school board campaign.

Also at the time Vernon Hill and Leroy Tyus were heading separate drives in the 20th ward to determine who would succeed Pat Lavin as the 20th Ward Democratic Committeeman, and in the 26th Ward Norman Seay and Austin Wright were locked in a same separate struggle to succeed Martin Tozer as Democratic Committeeman. Tyus and Seay were the victors. It increased the number of black Democratic committeemen to four in North St.



## THE ELECTION OF McNEAL

The primary strategy in the McNeal campaign was divided into two parts: (1) Unifying the black voter in the 7th Senatorial District behind McNeal for the August primary, and (2) politically isolating Sen. Hogan as much as possible in the ward units of the 7th Senatorial District.

On unifying the black voter behind McNeal, the major problem flowed from the fact that two other black candidates were in the race — Rev. Frank Madison Reid, Jr. and Joseph W.B. Clark. A series of friendly meetings were held with Rev. Reid. He finally agreed to withdraw from the race and serve as chairman of a broad citizens committee for McNeal. Joseph Clark also later withdrew.

The political isolation of Sen. Hogan was achieved when black pressure in the 4th and 22nd wards "encouraged" Irish leaders such as Matt O'Neill and Jack Dwyer that an endorsement of T.D. McNeal could be good politics. All factions in the war-torn 20th, including Democratic committeeman Pat Lavin, endorsed McNeal. The results of the August primary elect were: State Sen. Edward Hogan 2,110 — T. D. McNeal 12,660. McNeal received 90 percent of the vote. This sweep also carried Hugh White to victory in his contest against another Irishman, John M. Lavin, for the 16th state legislative district.

After defeating Republican Wilson in the 1960 Missouri General Election by a vote of 33,571 to 6,550 McNeal became the first black elected to the Missouri State Senate and to become one of the most politically astute and respected members of the Missouri General Assembly. He ushered the first civil rights bill through the Mo Legislature in 1961 to become the "man who brought civil rights to Missouri."

## ST. LOUIS BLACKS AND KENNEDY

1960 had also set the stage for another political drama in which the St. Louis black community would play an unusual part. It was the Kennedy-Nixon Presidential race. It was the first time that America would elect a Catholic. But it was tough sledding in out-state Missouri. Many Democratic politicians were quietly working against John F. Kennedy, primarily because he was Catholic. When the state-wide vote hit St. Louis on election night, Richard Nixon led John F. Kennedy by 90,000 votes. When the count was completed in St. Louis Kennedy had 202,319 votes and Nixon 101,331 votes. Kennedy, through his St. Louis victory, had won Missouri by approximately 9,000 votes.

However, in breaking down the figures and percentages, they reveal that St. Louis wards predominantly white gave Kennedy 62 percent of their vote. However, in wards and precincts predominantly black Kennedy received nearly 83 percent of the vote. If the St. Louis black community had voted at the 62 per cent level for Kennedy as obtained in the white community Richard Nixon would have carried Missouri.

## THE NEW CITIZEN

In December 1960 a new community newspaper emerged to give voice to the active and independent thrust for social, economic and political change in the St. Louis black community. It was "The New

Ernest Calloway. A Board of Editorial Consultants included Margaret Bush Wilson, T. D. McNeal, Charles Oldham, Hugh White and James Hurt, Jr. In one of its early issues, *The New Citizen* announced that "It operated on the strong assumption that a **community newspaper today cannot adequately serve as an out-dated carbon copy of the commercial daily press.** A minority community newspaper, by its very nature, must become an active participant in the struggle and problems of the community which it seeks to serve. It must get into the thick of the effort to make the community a better place for all".

## A BLACK POLITICAL PROCLAMATION IN 1960

Its first editorial served as a broad political guide for several years. It was entitled: **The Time Is Now: A St. Louis Negro Political Proclamation.** It said in part.

"The recent election figures reveal that the wards predominantly Negro in St. Louis have achieved a new political role in the city. This community, although, constituting 28% of the total population now represents some 40% of the hard-core support the Democratic Party receives in the City of St. Louis. This is a dynamic political fact that must be reckoned with by our local political system.

"With this basic figure let us get down to some of the other political facts of life. We are quite certain that if the Italian community represented this high degree of voting power, Italian leaders would dominate our municipal government. The same is true for the Syrian, Lebanese and Jewish communities."

"Why do we use a different political yardstick for Negroes. A yardstick that measures consideration in terms of crumbs instead of a substantial portion of the loaf."

"The Negro in St. Louis has reached the stage of the game where he needs to re-evaluate his political role and look up towards broad new political horizons. New Horizons that are in keeping with his dominant numerical strength."

These new horizons must be pragmatic, and would include the following 10 point program:

- (1) The immediate passage of a strong Fair Employment Practices Act by the Board of Aldermen.
  - (2) The passage of a strong civil rights or public accommodations ordinance by the Board of Aldermen.
  - (3) An agreement among Democratic leaders to fully back and support a Negro for one of the 12 "county" offices.
  - (4) An agreement among Democratic leaders to fully back and support a Negro for one of the three city-wide municipal offices.
  - (5) The appointment of a competent Negro by the Mayor to one of the top administrative (cabinet) posts in city government.
  - (6) To begin preparing the ground-work for full Democratic Party support of a qualified Negro for one of the St. Louis Congressional seats.
  - (7) The appointment of a Negro to the Board of Police Commissioners and the Board of Election Commissioners by the Governor.
  - (8) A new look at the structure of municipal commissions and boards with the view of placing competent Negroes on such commissions.
  - (9) Election of the second Negro to the Board of Education.
  - (10) The development of a new sense of unity among Negro political leaders which is needed to firm up on the growing political self confidence emerging in the St. Louis Negro community.
- (To be continued. 1961 and Points 2, 5 and 9)



## One Man's Thoughts: Politics, 1980



# The Time Of The St. Louis Black Renaissance, Part 6

## Aldermanic Body Adopts First Major Civil Rights Ordinance In St. Louis

By ERNEST CALLOWAY

The wholesale barring of blacks from places of public accommodations (restaurants, lunch counters, movie houses, theaters, hotels, river boats, swimming facilities, etc.) was perhaps more prevalent in America before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 than any other form of racial discrimination. It operated not only in the south, but also in many other areas outside of the south.

With its historical record of conservative racial attitudes, St. Louis was perhaps a major urban center outside of the south that tenaciously clung to the social and psychological need of barring blacks from places of public accommodations. Many blacks classified St. Louis as the most segregated city outside of the solid south at the time.

What about civil rights activity. for the most part during the 1920's and 30's the national NAACP concentrated on the legal and legislative aspects of the larger issues of terrorism (KKK), lynchings and later education.

However, in the early 1940's the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist group created a Committee on racial equality with an inter-racial group of students at the University of Chicago to experiment with a program of direct action in the area of public accommodations. Their first project was Stoner's Restaurant, a well-known Loop Restaurant in down-town Chicago. This was the beginning of the peaceful, non-violent restaurant and lunch counter sit-ins. The group of young activists finally separated from FOR and formed an independent group in Chicago — the Congress Of Racial Equality, and CORE, an inter-racial civil rights group, dedicated to direct action, was born.

### ST. LOUIS CORE

St. Louis CORE, organized in 1948 by the incomparable Bernice Fisher, one of the founders of the Chicago group, was the second CORE unit in the country. Bernice Fisher, a unique personality was an organizer for the United Distribution Workers Union (later it became Teamsters Local 688). She enlisted such St. Louis direct actionists as Marian O'Fallon, Charles Oldham, Wanda Penny, Norman Seay, Billie Ames, Margaret Dagen, Marvin Rich and others. At the time St. Louis was the center of activity of several major racial "hate" groups, most notably Gerald L. K. Smith's Christian Nationalists. With the CORE sit-in technique St. Louis became a



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great testing ground for non-violent, passive resistance and the ability to accept violence from the race hate groups without retaliation.

Consequently, the many confrontations between violence and non-violence in St. Louis conditioned CORE for its national moral thrust. St. Louis CORE quickly became the leading exponent of the new technique in social protest during the 1950's and provided a great deal of the national leadership. By far, it was the major force against the St. Louis system of barring blacks from places of public accommodations.

### LEGISLATIVE THRUST

In 1953 a legislative dimension was added to this struggle in the St. Louis Board of Aldermen. that year a Public Accommodations Bill was introduced into the Board of Aldermen prohibiting discrimination against blacks in restaurants, hotels, movies, theatres, etc. This year the proposed bill died in the Legislative Committee, unable to receive the necessary vote to report it out of committee.

It was re-introduced in the 1954 session of the Board of Aldermen, but only received nominal support.

In the 1955 session of the Aldermanic body, the measure again died in Committee.



In the 1956 session of the Board of Aldermen, it was reported out of committee, but was defeated on the floor by a vote of 16 to 10.

In 1957 it was again voted out of committee and again defeated, but this time by a two vote difference — 14 to 12.

In 1958 another vote was gained when it reached the floor of the Board of Aldermen and defeated by a vote of 15 to 13.

In 1959 ground was lost when the Public Accommodations measure was lost by a vote of 15 to 13.

#### PRECEDING THE 1961 VOTE

The 1960 vote again was a defeat for the measure. This time the vote was 17 to 11. However, during this year a series of changes developed in this struggle. CORE and the NAACP Youth Council had been conducting some restaurant sit-ins and a number of arrests had been made. Mayor Raymond Tucker called a halt to the arrests and indicated that no one would be prosecuted in municipal court for peaceful sit-ins. This placed a great deal of pressure upon the restaurants.

Eventually the Missouri Restaurant Owners Association, strong opponents of the Public Accommodations measure, entered into an understanding with the St. Louis NAACP and St. Louis CORE to pursue a program of quiet desegregation on the part of down-town restaurant owners. This voluntary program of restaurant desegregation was very successful. CORE and NAACP representatives assisted in making "tests" with the co-operation of restaurant owners to check white customer reaction to blacks being served.

When the 1961 Public Accommodations Bill was introduced into the St. Louis Board of Aldermen, all down-town and mid-town restaurants had voluntarily desegregated without any trouble at all. And so, on May 19, 1961 the St. Louis Board of Aldermen finally found the political courage to adopt its first major civil rights ordinance by passing the Public Accommodations ordinance by a vote of 20 to 4 with 2 not voting and 3 aldermen absent.

#### HURT ELECTED TO SCHOOL BOARD

Several weeks before this historic legislative event in the Board of Aldermen, the school board election had been held, and the St. Louis black community had achieved another significant victory. With 72,670 votes, James Hurt, Jr. became the second black to be elected to the St. Louis Board of Education. He joined the Rev. John J. Hicks, who was the first black elected in 1959. Both were elected for six year terms.

Hurt's election was marked by a heavy turn-out of voters, due primarily to the keenly contested mayoralty race in which Mayor Raymond R. Tucker was re-elected.

In the school board election four candidates were to be selected. Hurt was among the top four winners in 18 of the 28 wards. He emerged 1st in 8 wards, 2nd in two wards, 3rd in two wards and 4th in five wards.

#### THE CHESTER STOVALL APPOINTMENT

Within six months after the 10 point black political manifesto was issued in the autumn of 1960, two parts had been achieved during the spring of 1961 — (1) the passage of a Public Accommodations ordinance by the Board of Aldermen and (2) the election of the second black to the Board of Education.

An additional point in the Manifesto was to become a reality Sept. 19, 1961 when Mayor Raymond R. Tucker appointed Chester M. Stovall as Director of Welfare for the City of St. Louis. In moving into this major administrative spot in St. Louis municipal government, Stovall — and Urban League executive — became the first black to serve in a municipal cabinet post in local government.

In commenting on the appointment, the "New Citizen" stated at the time:

"Mr. Stovall is highly qualified and enjoys the full confidence of the Negro community."

"His appointment will have significant impact upon the trend in St. Louis to create a new dynamic political and community partnership between Negro and white citizens as the primary step in seeking to solve many of our difficult municipal problems."

"The Stovall appointment, backed up by the passage of the municipal public accommodations ordinance, the passage of the State FEPC, the election of Sen. T. D. McNeal, and the election of two Negroes to the Board of Education, are all significant developments in the direction of full political partnership. These developments are adding credit to the democratic substance of St. Louis, and more important — are providing impetus for a new approach in depth to the problems of population change, industrial development and the economic revitalization of our core city. In short, let us all — black and white — cast aside the limited parochialism, and begin to play for the big stakes in urban survival.

"Within the Negro community, the deep implications of these recent political developments — including the Stovall appointment — are many."

"In a primary consideration it means that the Negro political community must begin making a gradual and orderly retreat from its traditional parochialism in approaching many community problems and must seek a broader view of the total community. As a political tool this narrowness of view served its limited purpose. We now must get out of the nickel limit game of politics. We must now move into a new expanding frame of political reference. The old narrow view becomes a liability and limits our ability to play for the big secure community stakes."

"This does not mean that the basic struggle for full citizenship and equality is completed. That fight and agitation must be continued with increasing tempo. But it does mean that the solution to many of these problems are intimately related to overall municipal problems. As an example: improved economic and job opportunities for Negroes and others are closely related to the current problem of industrial land-use and the rate economic and industrial growth in St. Louis. Consequently, the problems of industrial land-use and the rate of industrial development must be given as much sober and articulate attention as the agitational picket line or the protest mass meeting."



## One Man's Thoughts: Politics, 1980

# Can Black St. Louisians Full Support Black Candidates For City-Wide Office?

By ERNEST CALLOWAY

Within the past two decades some 16 St. Louis black citizens have participated in 23 primary, general and special elections as candidates for city-wide posts. They have sought such offices as the Mayor, President of the Board of Aldermen, Comptroller, Sheriff, Circuit Attorney, License Collector, Public Administrator, City Treasurer, Recorder of Deeds and Clerk of the Court of Criminal Correction.

The city-wide offices that have received the most attention from black candidates are the Sheriff's office and the President of the Board of Aldermen. In 1968 Benjamin Goins was a candidate for Sheriff and lost. In 1972 James Troupe was a candidate. He also lost to Sheriff Martin Tozer. In a Special Election in 1977 Ben Goins won the office, but later had to give it up because of a conviction in federal court. In 1978 John Staples lost the race in a write-in campaign.

Ald. Joseph W. B. Clark was the first black candidate for President of the Board of Aldermen in 1969 and also in 1971. Elbert Walton was a candidate for this office in 1975, and just recently Eugene Bradley. All three lost their respective campaigns.

Since 1970 the License Collector's office has been occupied by blacks and they have won primary and general elections for this office. Ben Goins was elected in 1970 and resigned in 1977. Lawrence Woodson was elected in 1978.

Two blacks have been candidates in the Democratic primary for Circuit Attorney. They are Curtis Crawford in 1964 and Helton Reed in 1976. In 1973 John Bass was elected Comptroller, but defeated in 1977.

In 1962 Fred Weathers was a candidate for Clerk of the Court of Criminal Correction. In 1970 Ralph Scales ran for Recorder of Deeds; in 1972 Roscoe McCrary and R. C. French ran for Public Administrator while Louis Ford ran for City Treasurer. In 1977 Cong. William Clay was a write-in candidate for Mayor of St. Louis.

Only 3 of the 16 black citizens have tasted final victory in the struggle for city-wide offices over the past 20 years — Benjamin Goins, John Bass and Lawrence Woodson. Perhaps the major key here was Ben Goins. He was appointed License Collector in 1968, elected in 1970 and 1974. He organized the



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John Bass campaign for Comptroller in 1973 and was primarily responsible for his election. In 1977 Goins vacated the office that led Lawrence Woodson to become License Collector. In 1977 Goins was elected Sheriff in a special election.

### Negative Political Stance

Nevertheless, the St. Louis black community — over the past 15 years — has maintained a negative political stance as a voting entity. More important, it has grievously failed to make new municipal power a black community goal through effective, creative and maximized use of the ballot. This fact alone is perhaps the most serious tragedy of local black urban life over the past 15 years. The community had all of the tools (the ballot box), the raw material (potentially 47% of the Democratic Party vote in the city), but grievously failed to use them to the advantage of city in general and the black community in particular.

There are — however — several key factors that greatly assisted in this political deterioration and have weighted heavily against any such achievement of black community power in St. Louis municipal government.



### Three Problem Areas

1—The politically sick fragmentation that undermines any possibility of unity of purpose among black Democratic committeemen. The levels of inter-group jealousy and suspicion are so intense that the recent Tink Bradley fiasco in the black wards was a normal, northside operation. Maximizing registration and voter turn-out is not the prime concern of most local black political leaders.

2—For the most part many of these Democratic committeemen in the black community have created their own power broker operation. These little power brokerage turfs are maintained at the cost of a major community political thrust. The power brokers will hold down registration and voter turn-out in a given election unless the necessary fees have exchanged hands.

3—There is a normal resistance on the part of many Americans towards participating in Primary elections, but in the case of the St. Louis black wards and the 23 elections involving black candidates for city-wide offices, the problem is

more acute. Over the past 20 years involving the 23 elections there were an average of 69,604 registered voters per election with an average turnout of 15,485 black St. Louis voters to vote for a black citizen running for a city-wide office. This represents an average Support Rate of 22.4% for Black City-wide candidates by the St. Louis black community. Of only one out of every 5 registered black voters voted for a black running for a city-wide office.

### The Syrian-Steamfitter Factor

Yet, there is still another aspect to the problem of maximizing the political influence of the black community, and it comes from an altogether different direction. It is the use the Syrian and Steamfitter Union political factions made of new, young black Democratic committeemen — during the 60's and 70's — to advance their causes at the expense of the political thrust of the black community. It was often referred to as the Sorkis Webbe-Doc Lawler-Larry Callanan political group. The two black committeemen who were constantly at war with each other — William Clay and Benjamin Goins — were under the influence

Summary Of St Louis Black Citizens Serving As Candidates For City-wide Office In Democratic Primary Elections And The Extent Of Black Leadership And Voter Support In The Predominantly Black Wards Of St Louis Between 1962 And 1980

Candidate	Office Sought	Date	No Of Black Wards	No Of Voters In Wards	Votes Cast In Predominantly Black Ward For Black Candidates	
					Number	% In Ward
Fred Weathers	Clerk, CC Court	8/7/62	7	79,346	16,547	20.9%
Curtis Crawford	Cir. Attorney	8/4/64	8	80,291	24,917	31.1%
Benjamin Goins	Sheriff	8/6/68	8	72,651	19,760	27.2%
Joseph W.B Clark	Pres.Bd Of Ald.	3/4/69	8	73,098	12,308	16.8%
Ralph Scales (1)	Recorder Of Deed	8/4/70	8	63,583	2,836	4.5%
Benjamin Goins (1)	Lic. Collector	11/3/70	8	63,549	31,815	49.0%
Joseph W.B. Clark	Pres.Bd Of Ald.	3/9/71	8	61,466	14,335	23.5%
James P. Troupe (1)	Sheriff	8/8/72	10	84,017	18,606	19.7%
John Bass (1)	Comptroller	3/6/73	10	82,899	27,609	33.3%
Benjamin Goins (1)	Lic. Collector	8/6/74	10	66,268	22,703	33.3%
Elbert Walton	Pres.Bd Of Ald.	3/4/75	10	67,307	4,432	6.6%
Helton Reed	Cir. Attorney	8/3/76	10	67,099	12,253	18.2%
John Bass	Comptroller	3/8/77	10	68,699	25,114	34.0%
Cong Wm Clay	Mayor(write-in)	4/5/77	10	68,699	13,253	19.4%
John Bass	Comptr.(write-in)	4/5/77	10	68,699	13,923	20.4%
Benjamin Goins (1)	Sheriff(Sp.Elect)	5/17/77	10	69,208	8,471	12.4%
Lawrence Woodson	Lic. Collector	8/8/78	10	60,947	13,579	22.1%
Charles Staples	Sheriff	12/6/78	10	63,736	10,868	17.2%
Eugene Bradley	Pres.Bd Of Ald.	8/5/80	10	60,819	18,275	29.0%

(1) Elected to Office



of this Syrian-Steamfitter political syndrome. A political treatise could be written on these complex inter-relationships.

**The following is an outline of the efforts during the 60's to elect blacks to city-wide posts, and the results:**

#### **Fred Weathers**

It was Fred Weathers, Democratic Committeeman of the 18th Ward, who in 1962 became the first St. Louis black citizen to make a serious bid for a city-wide office. It was one of the 12 "county" offices, the Clerk of the Court of Criminal Correction. The incumbent in the office at the time was James P. Lavin, who had been deposed in 1960 as Democratic Committeeman in the 20th Ward by Leroy Tyus.

Under Lavin a great deal of scandal and thievery surrounded the office. Weathers had received the endorsement of both the Post Dispatch and Globe Democrat as an honest, superior candidate. But he was strongly opposed by the Lawler-Webbe-Lavin-Steamfitter faction in St. Louis politics. At the time these were mostly the so-called "river wards" with John Lawler of the 2nd and John Webbe of the 7th among the leaders. As a matter of fact, the "river wards" also had been strong opponents of black efforts to obtain a public accommodations ordinance during the 1950's. It was Raymond Leisure, alderman of the 7th Ward and Chairman of the Legislation Committee of the Board of Aldermen, who killed the public accommodations bill in committee several times during the 50's.

These were the elements that were opposed to Weathers for this key spot in the judicial system of St. Louis.

Their strategy was one of seeking to shift the emphasis away from the Weathers campaign in the black community to a major drive for Sorkis Webbe (son of John Webbe) for Public Administrator. Here the young black political leaders of the 26th ward carried the ball for Sorkis Webbe and the Steamfitters faction.

In the 7 black wards with 79,346 registered voters, Weathers received 16,547 votes or 20.9% of those registered. He received a total of 30,948 votes to Lavin's 34,051 votes or some 3,200 votes short of victory.

#### **Curtis Crawford**

In 1964 Curtis Crawford became the 2nd black St. Louisian to seriously ~~file~~ for a city-wide office in a Democratic primary. He failed for Circuit Attorney. And the same effort to undermine his election campaign as obtained in the Fred Weathers effort in 1962 took place. This time it came from the black and white political leaders supporting Warren Hearnes for Governor.

Weathers took the lead in support of Crawford and spoke out against those seeking to wreck the Crawford campaign. He said "We find the same elements in the Negro community working to undermine the Crawford candidacy as those that worked diligently to undermine my own

campaign in 1962 for Clerk of the Court of Criminal Correction.

In the 8 black wards with 80,291 registered voters, Crawford obtained some 24,917 votes or 31% of those registered. He lost to James Corcoran. The city-wide vote: Corcoran 57,656 votes — Crawford 37,686 votes. He would have been the winner with another 20,000 votes which were safely nestled in the recesses of the black community.

#### **Benjamin Goins**

In early 1968 Benjamin Goins, 21st Ward Democratic committeeman filed for Sheriff in the Democratic primary. The next day he was bitterly attacked in the press for taking this action by 26th Ward Committeeman William L. Clay and other black Democratic committeemen. The attack again raised grave doubts about the chances of a black St. Louisian being elected to a city-wide post.

It was not until Mr. Clay filed for Congress later in the year after the Steamfitters union had given its approval and Sorkis Webbe, the Syrian leader, moved in to reduce the political venom in north St. Louis and make the way safe for Clay that black leaders received their instructions to support Goins for Sheriff. They did.

But the voters carried on as usual. In the 8 black wards with 72,651 registered voters, Goins received 19,760 votes or 27.2% of those registered. The city-wide vote in the Democratic Primary for Sheriff — Martin Tozer 45,054 votes — Ben Goins 31,130 votes. Some 16,000 additional votes could have spelled victory for Goins.

#### **Joseph W. B. Clark**

Joseph W. B. Clark, a former President of the St. Louis NAACP and alderman representing the 4th Ward in 1969 filed as a Democratic candidate for President of the Board of Alderman.

Like Benjamin Goins running for Sheriff in 1968, Clark's candidacy for President of the Aldermanic body was coldly received by most of the black Democratic leaders on the grounds that the "time ain't right". The black political leaders or Democratic committeemen who refused to support Clark in the municipal primary of 1969 were James Troupe, 5th ward; Sam Goldston, 19th ward; Leroy Tyus, 20th ward; License Collector Ben Goins, 21st ward; John Conley, 22nd ward; and Cong. William Clay, 26th ward. The two black Democratic ward leaders that supported Clark were Frank Payne of the 4th Ward and Fred Weathers of the 18th ward.

The reason why Clark failed to get the support of the six black Democratic ward leaders because all were rushing to endorse and support Sorkis Webbe, the Syrian-Steamfitter candidate for the same office.

Of the 73,000 registered voters in the 8 black wards, Joseph Clark received 12,306 or 16.8 percent of the total. Three of the wards that had endorsed Webbe returned majorities for Clark to



the embarrassment of the three leaders — Tyus, Goins and Clay.

The winner of this contest of four candidates was Webbe with 29,745 votes. Clark received a city-wide total of 15,722 votes. Some 12,000 votes in the 8 black wards were cast for the 3 white candidates in the contest including nearly 10,000 for Webbe.

The four different experiences in the effort to elect blacks to city-wide posts during the 1960's went far in determining the quality of political activity during the 1970's, and the approaching disintegration of an independent, black political thrust that began with so much hope in the latter 50's and early 60's.

Although three blacks were elected to city-wide posts during the 70's (Goins, Bass and Woodson), the quality of black voter participation failed to improve in Democratic primary elections. So we begin the 80's with a tremendous loss in the case of Eugene Bradley's 18,275 votes from the 10 black wards. We did almost as well for Weathers in 1962, and better for Goins for Sheriff in 1968 and Crawford for Circuit Attorney in 1964.



Social Suffocation With Black Political Tribalism

# The Challenge Of Creative Black Majorityhood Politics In St. Louis

By Ernest Calloway

In 1960 the St. Louis black community reached 28.6% of the city's population. In 1970 the official black population was listed as 40.9% of the total, and in 1980 it is officially listed as 45.6% of the total population. By 1990 we estimate that blacks will constitute in excess of 54% of the city's population.

Somewhat contrary to the experience of other ethnic groups, and what appears to be so socially unique about the continuing percentage increase in the St. Louis black population is the existence of a significant factor. It appears that politically a self-defeating factor has been built into the population increase process. Developments indicate that as the St. Louis black population made quantitative gains there were qualitative decreases in political effectiveness.

Examples: In the 1960s when blacks were only 28% of the population they were breaking down political barriers by electing (1959) city-wide the first black to the board of education in the person of Rev. John Hicks; by electing the first black to the Missouri senate in the person of T.D. McNeal; by electing the first black woman to public office in Missouri in the person of DeVarne Calloway; by achieving three major civil rights ordinances in one of the most segregated cities in the north, and in 1967 hammering out in the Missouri legislature a re-apportioned First Congressional District in which a black could be and was elected to Congress from Missouri.

## 46% BLACK AND POLITICALLY DEAD

But in the 1980s when the black population had moved to 46% of the city's total, the black political failures began setting the tone early for the decade. The inept effort and failure to elect Eugene Bradley as President of the Board of Aldermen, the failure to obtain adoption of the Homer Phillips Hospital charter amendment, and the political butchering and throwing-up-for-grabs and First Congressional District in a six-month old demonstration of dead-end politics in the Missouri legislature. What are the operating conditions that

produce such negative political behavior as the percentage of black population increases and how can it be corrected?

## CONDITIONED MINORITY MENTALITY

There is such a thing as conditioned urban minority reflexes. Of course we would observe that the root concept of human minority, in a racial or ethnic sense, is built-in conditioning by social and economic circumstances that tend to serve an advantageous purpose for the self-proclaimed majority group or the superior group.

But the urban conditioning we are concerned about here is the development of a minority group mentality that tends to view itself within a limited parochial frame of social disability and low expectation. This seems to be less demanding than a self-view from the vantage point of accumulative strength and a growing awareness of the positive beneficial role it can assume in a changing urban environment. It is the game of urban colonialism with the different tribes competing for the crumbs.

There is no sector of our community where this unique conditioning is more evident than in the rambling, but limited politics of the St. Louis black ghetto. It appears that this conditioned minority reflex becomes more damaging as black population increases.

## MAJORITYHOOD POLITICS

Consequently, the gut political problem facing the St. Louis black community and its political leadership is one of breaking out of the confines of its self-defeating, ingrained minority mentality and embracing the more socially challenging politics of expanding majority-hood. Majorityhood politics suggest the politics of urban maturity, enlightened self-interest, a total view of the city and its problems, a rejection of the old systems of political colonialism, pay-offs and dependency, and a new creative political purpose. In short this demands a new urban ideology in the area of central city politics.

Too long the St. Louis black politicians have been in the political crumb business with the small turf, nickel limit games and the community has suffered badly. If the black community is to survive creatively, we must now begin playing for big political stakes and really making the ballot a major tool in carving out our own security and well-being. This is what majorityhood politics is all about.

Perhaps the greatest intellectual exercise demanded of majorityhood politics is one in which the St. Louis black community must view all public issues affecting the city and region as a



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whole as issues affecting the welfare of blacks also. An economically dead St. Louis will affect blacks as well.

### **SOLVING THE 1st CONG. DISTRICT PROBLEM**

The Missouri legislature has just completed a session in which Congressional re-apportionment dominated the headlines without any decision being reached after six months of name calling and map-making. A major issue centered around the present First Congressional district and black representation. A number of maps were drawn by many groups, but they all made the same mistake. Everyone, including Cong. W. Clay, made the First Congressional district a St. Louis county district rather than a city district. Here county population dominated and nearly half of the county (political units) became a part of the proposed new First district. Rambling all over St. Louis county in search of blacks who have deserted the city converts the First district into a gross political distortion that does not serve the long term political interests of the black community in the city.

Under black majorityhood politics the issue could have found a very simple solution and black interest in the city could have been well served. It only required some creative planning and some active coalition politics in Jefferson City rather than manipulation politics in a conditioned minority mentality frame.

With the city's population reduced to 453,000 persons, the First Congressional district should have included the whole of the city, which is 46% black, plus two whole townships in St. Louis county — Hadley and Normandy townships. University City is a part of Hadley township. In both of these county townships there is a substantial black population as well as a liberal white population in both of these county townships. Chances are that this proposal would have had the support of all Republicans, rural Democrats and St. Louis county Democrats. There may have been a few problems in south St. Louis, but we have them anyway.

### **A REVOLUTION IN BLACK INVOLVEMENT**

The key to making black majorityhood politics effective is a revolution in local black political involvement. The new awareness of enlightened self-interest, city-wide oriented politics as against the old political colonialism of small "turfdoms" and use of blacks as vote "fodder" will reflect an active effort to maximize the total and collective political strength of the St. Louis black community.

In the first instance some negative political arithmetic which has been lingering in the black community for the past 15 years must be changed. This would include the low level of voter

registration and the low level of black voter participation at the polls. The 48 — 32 percent levels of political involvement are classic examples of the low expectation and extreme sense of social disability flowing from a community with a conditioned minority group mentality. The figures mean that an average of 48% of the city's black voting age population is registered to vote, while only an average of 32% of those registered black voters participate in the many elections.

This must change in the St. Louis black community under majorityhood politics. A revolution in political involvement would take place if the St. Louis black community achieved an 80% voter registration rate and a regular 75% turn out rate at each election. The ballot and its effective use is the best weapon we have for change and security. We can set some real examples for national use here in the city. Picket lines, protests, and demonstrations are all important, but if 80 percent of the blacks around the nation began getting registered to vote it would have significant impact upon Washington and other places in America. It would be a real revolution.

### **AWARD CITIZEN ASSEMBLIES**

To achieve these new levels of social and political involvement will require a great deal of organization, social and community planning and understanding the operation of power in the city as a whole. But it can be done if there is a collective will to do.

Within several months the wards will be re-apportioned and each ward will have about 16,000 persons. To pursue much of this program of majorityhood politics and new levels of community involvement, we would suggest the formation of Citizen Assemblies in each of the predominantly black wards as well as those wards with a substantial black population. Presently 18 of the city's 28 wards would fall in these two categories. We would also estimate that the black voting age population is in the neighborhood of 145,000 and the goal should be to register 120,000 of this number.

The Citizen Assemblies at the ward level could be made up of neighborhood improvement groups, block units, church groups and concerned individuals. They would remain non-partisan, but pursue its major goal of voter registration in the ward and serve as a forum for problems in the area and organize for broad community action on these problems. A city-wide Citizens Assembly should be organized made up of delegates elected by the ward assemblies. Its primary function should be one of co-ordinating black voter registration, vote turn-out and various community action projects of ward units.